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VENEMAN ANNOUNCES OVER \$17 MILLION IN USDA RURAL DEVELOPMENT FUNDS TO SUPPORT JOB CREATION IN 19 STATES ***USDA Investments To Support 241 Rural Businesses, Create or Save 3,073 Jobs***

MINNEAPOLIS, Minn., Sept. 28, 2004—Agriculture Secretary Ann M. Veneman announced today that 36 applicants from 19 states have been selected to receive over \$17 million in loan and grant funds to assist with job and business development. The funds are part of the ongoing effort by the Bush Administration to spur additional economic activities in rural communities.

“The investment funds announced today are bringing new opportunities for creating jobs in communities across rural America,” said Veneman. “President Bush is working to support community leaders’ efforts to gain access to the financial tools they need for locally-driven economic development.”

Veneman said the \$17 million investment will help finance over 241 rural businesses, enabling them to create or save over 3,073 jobs. Many recipients will use the funding to expand businesses that play a major role in their communities. In Minnesota for example, a \$750,000 one-percent loan was approved for the White Earth Investment Initiative in Ogema, Minn. to create a revolving business loan fund for the White Earth Indian Reservation in Mahnomen, Becker and Clearwater Counties in northwest Minnesota.

“In rural communities throughout our nation, new jobs are being created as a result of the investments being made by USDA Rural Development,” said Acting Agriculture Under Secretary for Rural Development Gilbert Gonzalez. “These investments represent USDA Rural Development’s commitment to the future of rural communities.”

Over \$12.3 million of the loans announced today will support local [business revolving loan](#) funds to finance business facilities and community development projects in rural areas by re-lending funds locally to support business or community development. The remaining \$4.7 million will [support local cooperative organizations](#), which will utilize the funds by providing loans or grants to support local economic or community development efforts.

Fifteen distressed northeast Nebraska Counties will benefit from \$700,000 in low-interest Intermediary Relending Program loans that will be relent for business and community development. Northeast Nebraska Economic Development District of Norfolk, Neb. is the recipient of \$500,000 to provide gap financing to businesses in Antelope, Boone, Burt, Cedar, Colfax, Cuming, Dixon, Knox, Madison, Nance, Pierce, Platte, Thurston and Wayne Counties. Fifteen businesses are anticipated to be assisted through loans averaging approximately \$46,000, helping to create or retain 75 full-time equivalent jobs. Siouxland Economic Development Corporation of Sioux City, IA is receiving

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\$200,000 to deliver gap financing to businesses in Cedar, Dakota, Dixon and Knox Counties. Three projects, at present, have been identified to receive loan financing from the IRP funds awarded. These projects will create and/or retain seven full time and four part time jobs. Additional business projects to receive financing will be identified.

A complete list by program area can be found at www.rurdev.usda.gov. Funding of individual recipients will be contingent upon meeting the conditions of the loan or grant agreement.

USDA Rural Development's mission is to deliver programs in a way that will support increasing economic opportunity and improve the quality of life of rural residents. As a venture capital entity, Rural Development provides equity and technical assistance to finance and foster growth in homeownership, business development, and critical community and technology infrastructure. Further information on rural programs is available at a local USDA Rural Development office or by visiting USDA's web site at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov>.

For additional information on Nebraska IRPs awarded, contact Deborah Drbal at 402-437-5558, (402) 437-5093 (TDY); or deborah.drbal@ne.usda.gov. Visit <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/ne>.

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